

MINUTES
Urban County Planning Commission Public Hearing

August 31, 2017

1:30

Council Chambers, 2nd Floor Government Center

- I. **Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 1:32 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 2nd floor LFUCG Government Center, 200 East Main Street, Lexington, Kentucky.

Planning Commission members present: Headley Bell; Will Berkley; Mike Cravens; Larry Forester; Karen Mundy; Mike Owens; Frank Penn; Carolyn Plumlee; Carolyn Richardson; and William Wilson, Chair. Absent was Patrick Brewer.

Planning staff members present: Jim Duncan, Director; Chris Woodall; Traci Wade; Janice Westlund; Chris Taylor; Meghan Jennings; and Stephanie Cunningham.

- II. **Imagine Lexington 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update Goals & Objectives Public Input Hearing** – The Planning Commission will take public comment on the proposed Goals & Objectives of the *Imagine Lexington* 2018 Comprehensive Plan.

- a. Staff Presentation – Mr. Woodall provided a PowerPoint presentation on behalf of the staff, summarizing the Comprehensive Plan process up to this point. He noted the staff's focus on gathering and utilizing public input, which, largely because of the unprecedented public access through the On The Table process, yielded a great deal more public comment than is typically received during this process. Mr. Woodall also listed the studies and various sources of data that informed the draft Goals & Objectives, and provided a timeline for the rest of the process, which will likely continue through 2017. The staff hopes to have Council's approval of the Goals & Objectives by the end of 2017, in order to begin work on writing the Elements and Implementation portions of the Plan in early 2018.
- b. Public Comment – Mr. Wilson opened the floor for public comments, noting that, due to the number of citizens who wished to speak, a three-minute time limit would be imposed for each speaker. He added that the Planning Commission would not be voting on the draft Goals & Objectives at this hearing, but would have time for discussion following the public comment portion of the hearing.

John ?, address unknown, stated that he believes that the current population of the city is sufficient, and additional growth is not needed. He would like to see the community focus on sustainability with regard to population, as well as development.

Taylor Sawyer, Big Ass Fans, said that his company struggles constantly with finding large, contiguous parcels within Lexington; he noted that staff is currently spread out in five buildings, with a 20-minute drive between them. Citing data from the US Census Bureau, Mr. Sawyer noted that Lexington ranked 14th in the nation for start-ups in 2014, opining that it was critical for the community to be able to provide sufficient land for those companies to thrive.

Chas Hite, land use planner, stated that he was an eighth-generation Lexingtonian whose family located in the Athens area around the time of the formation of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. His family occupied Christian Place, one of the first brick homes in the County, for over 175 years. Mr. Hite complimented the staff and the Planning Commission for their hard work on the draft Goals & Objectives.

Mr. Hite stated that he was present to comment against the staff's recommendation not to expand the Urban Service Boundary, opining that the community does not have enough available land to last for five years. He believes that potential residents are being "priced out" of buying homes in Fayette County, due to the tight real estate market and lack of available land; those price increases could also make it nearly impossible to provide affordable housing, which would go directly against the proposed Goals & Objectives. Mr. Hite said that increased density is a noble goal, but the proposed draft's dependence on infill along the major corridors is overly optimistic and could further congest already overtaxed arterials. The focus on public transit also does not comport with the lifestyles of most people who live and work in Fayette County. Mr. Hite suggested making future expansions of the Urban Service Area conditional, requiring landowners to develop land within a certain timeframe, or developing a land exchange program.

Quincy Cutshaw, Denham-Blythe Company, read the following into the record:

"Denham-Blythe strongly urges the Planning Commission and Urban County Council to adopt policies that provide land that is readily available and properly zoned for the economic development in Lexington. We are a design/build construction firm based here in Lexington for over 40 years. Our company offers a full array of construction services to our existing and potential clients. Among those services, we provide guidance on searching for property for clients who wish to build new facilities in Lexington and abroad. We encourage our clients to build in Lexington whenever possible, to reduce costs, to aid in our community's growth as well as our company growth. However, the task of finding suitably-zoned property in Lexington has proved to be increasingly difficult in comparison to the neighboring counties and states. Lexington's limitations have caused it to lose potential clients and projects by forcing them to build outside our community, due to the insufficient land opportunities for their needs. We believe this trend can be mitigated with proper support from our government and our community leaders. More properly-zoned land will help Lexington to attract businesses that employ residents in high-wage jobs, and therefore will aid in growing Lexington's economy. By prioritizing this critical need for land in the Comprehensive Plan, Lexington will have the opportunity for the growth it deserves."

Carla Blanton, President, Commerce Lexington, stated that the Planning Commission had heard from many segments of the community about what goals they would like to see included in the Comprehensive Plan, but none of those goals can be achieved without a vibrant economy. Payroll tax, which makes up most of the city's revenue, is flat; Commerce Lexington believes that, unless the community creates more jobs, public infrastructure will not be sustained and there will be no money for new projects such as Town Branch Commons and the renovation of the old courthouse. Ms. Blanton opined that the community is quickly approaching a time when there is no more land that is available and ready to develop.

Commerce Lexington has identified fewer than 15 reasonable sites of at least ten acres, scattered throughout the city, which means large employers cannot be accommodated. Ms. Blanton stated that Commerce Lexington's economic development team travels extensively to promote the city; they are regularly told by site consultants that Lexington does not have a properly-zoned business parks for their projects.

Ms. Blanton noted that three projects that located outside Fayette County in recent years—More than a Bakery, Amazon Kindle, and Lakeshore Learning—could have generated an estimated tax revenue of almost \$2.2 million annually. She quoted Mike Mullis, a site selection expert who aided in bringing Tiffany & Company to Lexington:

“Economic developers and cities should have business parks with 200+ acres of land zoned with infrastructure in place.”

Ms. Blanton said that the natural beauty of Lexington is a recruiting tool that Commerce Lexington leverages and believes must be protected. However, they also believe that Lexington should invest in a new business park. Commerce Lexington strongly supports policies and initiatives to provide a sufficient supply of land that is readily available for economic opportunities and job creation, through a public or public/private business park aimed at recruiting high-wage jobs. The land should be shovel-ready, properly-zoned, have infrastructure and transportation access in place, and be competitively priced.

After reading the following quote from another site consultant, Ms. Blanton asked the Commission to ensure that job creation and flexibility remain central to the 2018 Comprehensive Plan:

“Available land, in a good condition with infrastructure and incentives in place, can be a critical factor in deciding whether to build a new facility or not. We also will need to see flexibility for zoning on the part of local government to promote further development and job growth.”

Richard Murphy, attorney, stated that he was present representing four clients. He said that he had recently been informed by planners in Nicholasville, during the course of a zone change there, that they “did not want Lexington’s starter homes in Nicholasville.” Mr. Murphy opined that the community cannot count on surrounding cities wanting to provide single-family detached housing for residents who cannot find such housing in Lexington.

Mr. Murphy opined that the staff’s proposed numbers rely heavily on the redevelopment of the city’s corridors; redevelopment at that scale would likely require small area plans, text amendments, and zone changes, none of which are likely to occur within the next five years.

Mr. Murphy said that he believes that some provisions need to be included in the Comprehensive Plan to allow for inclusion of small tracts that have been bisected by the Urban Service Boundary line. He said that many of the situations that resulted in the bisection of those properties no longer exist, so it makes no sense to eliminate all flexibility with regard to their inclusion.

Mr. Murphy noted that he has two clients who own larger tracts in the Winchester Road/Athens-Boonesboro Road areas. A study was done after the 1996 Expansion Area Master Plan to determine where growth should be located once it was needed; that study determined, based on topography, highway access, and low number of PDR farms, that those corridors would be the best location for growth in the community. He added that the exaction system is in place in Lexington so that the cost of new growth is borne by the developers, so that taxpayers do not subsidize growth. Mr. Murphy opined that the Urban Service Area needs to be expanded at this time in order to maintain the community’s active homebuilding industry.

Susan Speckert, Fayette Alliance, stated that she had previously submitted a letter in support of the majority of the proposed Goals & Objectives. Fayette Alliance believes that the key to achieving the innovative vision laid out by the Planning staff is not expanding the Urban Service Boundary or Rural Activity Centers. According to the data provided by staff, the community has plenty of land available to accommodate future growth without expansion, including more than 17,000 acres of vacant, undeveloped, and underutilized land.

Fayette Alliance contends that not expanding the boundary at this time would be fiscally responsible; they also maintain that existing vacant and underutilized land needs to be “activated.” The Planning Commission and Council have recently taken steps to do so, by adopting the P-2 and ED Zoning Ordinance text amendments. Ms. Speckert opined that those changes need an

opportunity to work. She added that not expanding the Urban Service Boundary would also protect the community's strong agricultural and tourism industries.

Ms. Speckert stated that Fayette Alliance was proud to be a partner in the recently released housing market study. During the presentation of that study to the Council, the consultant was asked by Councilmember Stinnett to discuss the biggest takeaway from the study. The consultant responded,

“You need to change significantly to a much more diverse housing product, if we’re going to meet the housing needs of our aging population, 20-somethings, working families, and low-income citizens.”

Ms. Speckert said that the majority of citizens do not support expansion of the Urban Service Boundary, as evidenced by the public participation in the On The Table program and public input meetings. She thanked the staff for their hard work and vision, asking the Planning Commission to embrace the innovative Goals & Objectives as proposed by staff.

Henry Duncan, adjoining county resident, stated that he had worked in many counties throughout the state during his career at the University of Kentucky. With regard to the data presented indicating that 51% of employees in Fayette County live outside the county, he said that a much higher percentage of shoppers and real estate professionals likely come to Lexington to do business as well, noting the importance of Lexington to the region and the entire state of Kentucky.

Mr. Duncan thanked the staff and the Planning Commission for their professionalism, opining that other counties should use this process as an example to guide their own development.

Don Robinson, 4152 Military Pike, chair of Fayette Alliance and member of the Rural Land Management Board, stated that he had served on the Planning Commission during the 1996 Expansion Area Master Plan. He applauded the staff for how evolved planning in Lexington has become, noting that the city has become a sophisticated town with a vibrant rural area since that time.

Gerri Henry and David Burke, representing Ashland Park Neighborhood Association, stated that their organization supported all the statements made by Fayette Alliance.

Elizabeth Jensen stated that she and her husband, Marc Guilfoil, own a small farm in southeast Fayette County. She noted that she is a member of the Greenspace Commission, and thanked that body, along with the members of the Rural Land Management Board and the Planning Commission, for their work on the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Jensen said that her farm is part of the Bluegrass Woodland Pasture geographic region, which was created by drought and grazing of the American bison hundreds of years before the land known as Kentucky was settled. The Woodland Pasture was important to early settlers, who brought cattle and sheep prior to the development of the horse industry; farmers did not need to clear the land, which had large open pastures for livestock as well as trees to provide habitat for indigenous species. Ms. Jensen read the following description of the Woodland Pasture area, from the writings of Lucy Braun, a renowned botanist:

“...the most anomalous vegetation area in the northeast United States. Still today there exists no habitat like this anywhere else in North America.”

Ms. Jensen stated that she and her husband bought their farm in Fayette County, investing in equipment and infrastructure, because they believed that Lexington has a history of commitment to balancing quality of life with economic growth, and preserving greenspace and agriculture. She

asked that the Commission adopt the 2017 Rural Land Management Plan and recommend to not expand the Urban Service Area.

Lee Acker, 108 Goodrich Avenue, stated that he does not want to see the Urban Service Boundary expanded.

Ty Brown, Lexington Bluegrass Association of Realtors (LBAR), stated that people want to live and work in Lexington, and those people need a place to live. He said that not everyone wants to live downtown, or on a 10-acre rural tract, or in a large house in a new subdivision; that is why there's a need for diverse, affordable housing in the community. Current trends and higher prices mean fewer homes on the market, which does not meet the current demand for new housing units.

Mr. Brown opined that it would be "naïve and frankly irresponsible" to consider infill and redevelopment as the community's only development strategy. He said gentrification is defined as "the process of renovating and improving a house or district so they conform to middle-class taste," and it can result in existing residents no longer being able to afford their homes. Mr. Brown stated that he believes the community will suffer without a balanced plan that allows for new growth and smart expansion of the Urban Service Boundary to allow for new construction and economic development zones in "areas that make sense."

John Groft, president-elect of LBAR, stated that his organization supports planned growth policies to encourage and sustain economic development, quality of life, and a diverse stock of housing types at all price levels. He believes that infill and redevelopment within the urban core are vital, but zero-growth policies cannot meet the community needs for housing, citing the data put forth in the Housing Demand Study and the Kentucky State Data Center.

Mr. Groft opined that the Comprehensive Plan should support the community's signature agribusiness and greenspace, but not ignore the need for commercial, industrial and residential opportunities. For those reasons, LBAR supports a Comprehensive Plan that provides the flexibility for the community to grow.

Mike Inman, Chair of Government Affairs, LBAR, thanked the staff for their work, but said that he and the membership of LBAR are opposed to retaining the existing Urban Service Boundary, due to concerns about housing affordability in the community. Mr. Inman cited statistics that he believes indicate that the pool of affordable homes within the reach of low- to moderate-income homebuyers might be shrinking.

Mr. Inman opined that continuing the community's infill and redevelopment policy without smart growth will result in increased housing costs and reduced affordability. The Housing Demand Study indicated that more Fayette County employees than ever are commuting in from other communities, resulting in increased traffic and demand for highways. Many classes of workers cannot afford to live in Lexington, particularly those who are first-time homebuyers, because of the lack of affordable housing stock. Mr. Inman said that he believes that restrictive expansion policies negatively impact families, and, for that reason, he urged the Planning Commission to vote against the proposed Goals & Objectives, and expand the Urban Service Area.

Chauncey Morris, Kentucky Thoroughbred Association, encouraged the Planning Commission to follow the staff's recommendations. He said that the thoroughbred industry, as part of the city's agricultural cluster, employs 19,000 people, amounting to \$2.3 billion in revenue. Income growth in Fayette County is 2-3% better than the national average, and the thoroughbred industry is part of that trend, despite a great deal of discussion in the past about contraction of the equine industry as a whole.

Jacob Walbourn, attorney, stated that he was not present representing a client. He said that he believes he has a unique perspective to offer, as a land use attorney who represents developers and neighborhoods, and as a resident who moved to Lexington from Ashland after high school.

Mr. Walbourn stated that expansion of the USB is not the only issue on the table; the Planning Commission must consider the proposed Goals & Objectives holistically. He opined that growth is vital to the community, in that tax revenue supports the city government, but that growth can take many forms. Mr. Walbourn asked the Planning Commission to “reject the all-or-nothing philosophy” of determining whether or not to expand the USB; he asked them, instead, to view the Goals & Objectives for fluidly, and provide the flexibility to judge developments on their merit and the needs of the community.

Barbara Sutherland, former LFUCG employee, stated that she had served on the Council and Mayor’s staff, and observed the Planning process through several Comprehensive Plans. She said that she is impressed with the current Goals & Objectives; although she, too, believes there is a need for flexibility, she believes that the USB should be maintained.

Ms. Sutherland applauded the stronger language in the proposed Goals & Objectives, opining that it will provide a range of housing types to residents at every income level and provide support to specific employment sectors. She also supports the creation of a “new process for determining long-term land use,” because she believes that, if the community continues to develop in the same way—simply creating more and more single-family, low-density housing--the USB will need to be expanded. Ms. Sutherland wants her grandchildren to have a place to live and work in Lexington, but she also wants them to be able to experience the community’s natural beauty and greenspace.

Carrie McIntosh, Fayette County Farm Bureau, stated that her organization supports maintaining the USB. The University of Kentucky agriculture cluster study showed one in 12 jobs in Fayette County is related to agriculture, with major annual contributions to the local tax base, tourism, and signature industries. She opined that Lexington is “an urban city with a rural backdrop;” the beauty of Lexington’s countryside is its brand, and it differentiates this community from other large cities in the region.

Ms. McIntosh stated that the 17,000 acres cited as vacant, underutilized, or undeveloped in Fayette County prove that there is still plenty of land available within the USB. The members of the Fayette County Farm Bureau support the staff’s recommendation of maintaining the current Urban Service Area and Rural Activity Center boundaries, with a continued focus on densification through infill and redevelopment, in order to “keep Lexington the Horse Capital of the World.”

Anne Gay Donworth, lifelong Lexington resident, stated that she and her husband, who immigrated from Ireland, started a horse business in Scott County, because no farm property was available in Fayette County. She believes that Kentucky is “still a land of opportunity.” She said she appreciates that the proposed Goals & Objectives look at not just Lexington, but the region; just as companies and businesses consider this area as a regional tax base, rather than a city.

Ms. Donworth was part of the On The Table group that worked with Planning staff, and she appreciates the great deal of effort that went into that public input process, as well as all the other data compilation that was part of the draft. She opined that the staff is well-trained and knowledgeable, and the Planning Commission should listen to their recommendations.

Ms. Donworth stated that increased density, along with better infrastructure and transportation systems, are admirable goals; however, they do not happen naturally. She asked that the Planning Commission vote to recommend approval of the proposed Goals & Objectives, which can help to further those programs for this community.

Jon Larsen, Lexington resident and former Judge-Executive, asked the Planning Commission to defer any decision on the proposed Goals & Objectives until a regional plan for the area has been developed. As a citizen member of the Bluegrass Area Development District and Metropolitan Planning Organization, he opined that the Mayor and Council have been avoiding regional planning decisions for decades, despite “unstoppable” growth. Mr. Larsen no longer considers Lexington a city; rather, he believes it is the “Bluegrass metropolitan area,” with a population of over 700,000 residents.

Mr. Larsen read the following:

“It seems disingenuous for builders and developers to insist that Lexington’s Planning Commission alone expand its urban boundaries and rural area to accommodate anticipated regional population growth and affordable housing needs.”

Mr. Larsen opined that there are areas in the community that can be used for growth, but connectivity and regionalism outside Fayette County must be considered.

Phyllis Hasbrouck, Hart Court, stated that she moved to Lexington in 1962 and is a supporter of preservation. She said that she appreciates the way that the community has organized to protect itself, and she supports the staff’s proposed Goals & Objectives and recommendation not to expand the USB.

Amanda Matthews, Russell Cave Road, stated that she and her husband, Brad Connell, own a small horse farm as well as Prometheus, a specialized design/build firm. She said that they understand the needs of families, farmers and businesses.

Ms. Matthews asked that the Planning Commission not recommend expansion of the USB until “every effort has been made to accommodate future growth, both for families and businesses, through all means possible, including adaptive re-use and/or gentrification of underutilized properties.” She opined that it is very important to preserve agricultural land and the community’s designation as Horse Capital of the World, which is recognized worldwide.

Brad Connell, 3170 Russell Cave Road, stated that he had moved to Lexington 19 years ago from Atlanta, which he believes is the “poster child” for poor urban planning and development. He said that he would hate to see the same type of sprawl in Lexington. Although there are many good arguments from developers that infill and redevelopment are more difficult and costly, he does not believe Lexington’s residents should have to bear the cost of expansion.

Stephen Howard, president, Building Industry Association of Central Kentucky (BIA), stated that he is a horse farm owner who has worked as a real estate professional for over 30 years. He said that he decided as a child growing up in Meade County that Lexington was a great place to live; he came to the city to attend the University of Kentucky and stayed for his career.

Mr. Howard opined that “expansion” is often used as a negative term by “anti-growthers,” but he believes it is an opportunity. He believes that there are areas where expansion can occur without destroying agricultural uses. Land costs and lack of incentives for infill and redevelopment are challenging for developers, and towns other than Lexington are often more competitive for those types of development projects. Mr. Howard said that he appreciates the work that has gone into the draft Goals & Objectives, but he believes that the community is behind on creating a vision for growth, and for that reason, he supports the expansion of the USB.

Todd Johnson, Building Industry Association of Central Kentucky (BIA,) stated that his association has been in Lexington for over 65 years. He said that there are a lot of emotions involved in the

question of expansion of the USB, but the consequences of making the wrong decision often get lost.

Mr. Johnson opined that the staff's recommendation not to expand the USB is not in accordance with the results of the Housing Demand Study and the facts about the housing market in Lexington. He added that he does not believe that the recommendation appropriately addresses the future housing needs of Lexington residents. Mr. Johnson contends that "vacant land" inside the USB does not constitute "available land," and that only approximately 1,800 acres of the 5,600 identified by staff are truly available for significant housing production. Even with increases in density, the city's projected housing needs will require double the amount of land available without expansion of the USB. The impact of the decision not to expand will likely be continued negative impacts on housing affordability in the community.

Mr. Johnson asked the Planning Commission to consider two questions: 1) What if not expanding the USB is the wrong decision, and neighborhoods continue to feel the pressure of non-compatible development; and 2) what if expanding is the right decision to see affordability maintained?

Mary Campbell, Historic South Hill Neighborhood Association, stated that she supports the staff's recommended draft Goals & Objectives. She urged the Commission to consider adding language to ensure the protection of neighborhoods, particularly the most vulnerable historic neighborhoods. She submitted proposed language to be added to the record of the hearing.

Alan Bartley, 353 South Mill Street, stated that he is an academic economist and 18-year downtown resident. As an economist, he said that he has been trained to see both sides of an issue; he believes that the other portions of the Comprehensive Plan, which also affect the quality of life in the community, are just as important as the proposed Goals & Objectives.

Mr. Bartley opined that, after reviewing all of the information the staff made available online, he supports the staff's recommendations to maintain the USB. He said that the proposed Goals & Objectives does not offer specific language to protect historic structures; he would suggest, if the Planning Commission chooses to use the staff's proposed language to require intense infill and redevelopment, adding language in the other sections to protect quality of life and historic structures. Much like rural land, historic buildings cannot be replaced once they are destroyed, and Mr. Bartley believes the historic nature of downtown Lexington deserves protection.

Mary Dianna Hanna, 6398 Old Richmond Road, president of the Old Richmond Road Neighborhood Association, stated that her organization strongly advocates for preservation and enhancement of the rural area. It is a large and active neighborhood association, and has been impactful on planning decisions in the past.

Ms. Hanna said that she asked her association members to comment on the proposed Goals & Objectives, noting that she did not receive any responses from residents who were in favor of expansion of the USB. She said that she supports the Fayette Alliance position on not expanding the USB.

Bub Crutcher, business owner, stated that he has been in business in Fayette County for over 40 years. He opined that there are some properties in the rural area that are not fit for agricultural use, which should be considered for inclusion in the Urban Service Area. He noted that he has been attempting to get one of his properties added to the USA for 19 years, over the duration of four Comprehensive Plans. In the past, sewerability was an issue in the Blue Sky Rural Activity Center area, but that problem has since been resolved by routing of wastewater to the West Hickman treatment plant.

Mr. Crutcher notes that he loves and appreciates horse farms and greenspace, but his 35-acre property on Athens-Boonesboro Road would be more suitable as part of the Blue Sky Rural Activity Center, which is surrounded by commercial uses. He asked that the Planning Commission consider the addition of that property, and others similarly situated, rather than electing not to expand the USB.

Leslie Foster, Lexington resident, stated that he is a retiree who has lived in Lexington approximately a year. He believes that the community is a great place to live, but he is concerned about the limited space between houses in new neighborhoods, which can be a life safety issue.

Amy Clark, 628 Kastle Road, stated that she was present on behalf of Walt Gaffield, representing the Fayette County Neighborhood Council (FCNC). The FCNC submitted a letter, supporting their core values of good planning, good design, protection of the environment and greenspace, and holding the line on the USB. Ms. Clark said that her organization supports the staff's recognition of those values in the proposed Goals & Objectives, and added that FCNC also supports transit development and transportation planning that lessens dependence on private cars.

Ms. Clark stated that the Comprehensive Plan must work, because a "road paved with good intentions will not take us where we want to go." The proposed draft focuses on intense urban development along corridors, which have been deemed "underutilized," in order to meet housing demand and foster major employment. The FCNC would ask that the staff replace the word "intense" with "multi-story," "compact," and "mixed-use," while setting standards to limit lot coverage and protect green and open space. In addition, Ms. Clark suggested replacing "underutilized" with "blighted," "decayed," or "commercial blighted and decayed." She opined that those changes to the language would maintain the staff's desire to intensify development along the corridors, while recognizing that the existing zoning categories are naturally arranged by intensity.

Ms. Clark asked that the Planning Commission also consider returning to the use of a map as part of the Comprehensive Plan, in order to target the best areas for the proposed corridor development. She said that proponents and objectors to a zone change often use the same Comprehensive Plan reference, because most of the language is too broad.

Ms. Clark said that neighborhood conservation should also be a consideration for the Planning Commission, noting that six dwelling units per acre is a good density target, but "green and canopied" development should be emphasized. She believes that a historic preservation plan should also be included.

Nick Nicholson, attorney, stated that he was speaking on behalf of himself at this hearing, not representing a client. He said that, as part of the Comprehensive Plan process, the Planning Commission is hearing from more voices than typically participate during zone changes.

Mr. Nicholson said that he was "skeptical of numbers," so he prepared his own estimate of the amount of vacant land within the USB, which he distributed to the Commission members. Just under 2,400 of the vacant acreage is located in the Expansion Area; Mr. Nicholson believes that development is not occurring in those areas due to problems with the exaction program, which is not being updated as often as it should. In addition, many properties included in the vacant acreage are held by owners who are not likely to sell, including Overbrook Farm and land owned by the University of Kentucky. By Mr. Nicholson's estimate, 3500 acres then remain, 561 of which are already covered by existing development plans. Mr. Nicholson believes that having only 3,000 acres of vacant land "is a problem." He opined that increased floor area ratios and density along corridors are good targets, but will not be enough to allow the community to grow appropriately; Lexington needs to be considering how and where to grow, as well.

Buddy Goodwin, General Counsel for Ball Homes, stated that, in his experience, there is a known need for housing in the community. Many people want to live in Fayette County, but land that is available for development as single-family residences is scarce. Developers, including Ball Homes, are forced to look for land in other communities, which does nothing to satisfy housing needs in Fayette County. Many residents who have bought homes in surrounding communities work in Lexington, and would rather live where they work, but the opportunities are not available.

Mr. Goodwin opined that the focus on infill is admirable, but there is not sufficient land available for infill projects. He believes that expansion is warranted; at the least, the time is right for the community to identify how and where it should grow, while preserving the beauty of the Bluegrass.

Scotty Baesler, former Mayor, stated that he believes that land at the Interstate 75/exit 104 interchange should be added to the existing Blue Sky Rural Activity Center (RAC). This RAC was established in the 1970s, at 20 acres in size, and it has not been expanded since that time. The area is now sewered, with a trunk line running through the property, and should now be included in the RAC.

In addition, Mr. Baesler opined that the property within the Interstate at the same interchange should be included in the USB. The interstate and Athens-Boonesboro Road serve as natural boundaries, so it would seem logical that the USB should be extended to that location.

Mr. Baesler asked the Planning Commission to consider adding those properties, along with Mr. Crutcher's, to the USB at this time. If they are not added as part of this Comprehensive Plan, a process should be developed that would allow them to be added soon; they should not be allowed to sit vacant for another five years. The properties have been unused for many years, and Mr. Baesler believes the property owners deserve consideration.

Kelly Weber, director of Ashland Terrace Retirement Home, thanked the staff and the Planning Commission members for their time. She also thanked the staff for their consideration of Lexington's seniors, which is the fastest-growing segment of the population, and their need for affordable housing. Ms. Weber said that she also appreciates the staff's willingness to include the Senior Service Commission in the writing of the rest of the Comprehensive Plan.

Chairman Wilson declared a recess at 3:30 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 3:41 p.m.

Commission Comments: Mr. Wilson asked each of the Planning Commission members to summarize what they heard from the public during the input portion of the hearing.

Ms. Plumlee stated that she heard "the chronic argument" between the development community and those want preservation, including historic, rural, and agricultural interests. She said that the question that remains is how to balance those needs.

Mr. Penn said that he heard "how," "when," and "flexible." He noted that this is his third Comprehensive Plan, and he believes that it could be the best one he has participated in, but it will require a leap of faith with regard to how and when to provide for the community's needs, and how to provide flexibility. Mr. Penn said that the lowest common denominator should be those questions, and everything else should be built on that, recognizing that not everyone will get what they want.

Ms. Mundy agreed with Mr. Penn, noting that she was concerned to hear that exaction rate table updates were not being done as required. She said that she was also concerned about the proposed densification of the corridors, and the property owners who have been in those locations for decades but might not have the capital to redevelop. Ms. Mundy thanked the staff for their hard work in getting to this point in the process.

Mr. Forester thanked the staff, noting that he is new to the process but he believes he is learning. He stated that everyone who spoke was passionate about Lexington's growth, and flexibility with regard to that growth is important. He asked that the Planning Commission take a pragmatic approach and come up with a mutually beneficial solution.

Mr. Berkley thanked the staff and participants, opining that flexibility was one of the key points from the public comments. He said that the "how" and "where" questions indicate the need for planning, and for land for economic development.

Mr. Owens stated that he heard that there are needs for housing and economic development land, and that the agricultural economy, tourism industry, historic features, and quality of life are important to the community. He opined that the biggest takeaway from the public comments is the need for flexibility moving forward. Mr. Owens thanked the staff for their work, and asked the staff to provide information on any emails received as well.

Mr. Wilson asked when and how the emails would be distributed to the Commission members. Mr. Duncan responded that the emails would be scanned and placed in the Google drive for the Commission members to review.

Mr. Cravens said that he was pleased by the balance of the comments, and the civility of the discussion during the hearing. He said that he heard about the need for flexibility, and that many citizens who are opposed to expansion of the USB see opportunities for flexibility as well.

Ms. Richardson thanked the staff, noting that this is a long, arduous process. She stated that the comments she heard were equally divided, but that everyone who spoke loves Lexington and wants the best for the community, regardless of their position on expansion of the USB. She opined that the Planning Commission needs to keep that in mind and work hard to get things right as the process moves forward, while maintaining the flexibility to provide for current and future needs.

Mr. Bell echoed Mr. Forester's comments, noting that, as a new member, he has been very impressed with the staff's dedication, expertise, passion, and time commitment. He said that the fact that 11,000 citizens spoke their mind demonstrates a love of Lexington. Mr. Bell added that he agreed that the comments were balanced and fair, with everyone trying to balance present and future needs for the community.

Commissioner Comments: Derek Paulsen, Commission of Planning, Preservation, and Development, stated that the staff is working with several attorneys, including Mr. Nicholson, to update the exaction rate tables, which have not updated in several years. Meetings are ongoing, with a large number of closeouts still to be accomplished, but Dr. Paulsen hopes that the process will be complete soon.

Mr. Wilson said that he believed that the key word from today's public comments was "flexibility." He said that he was gratified that the Planning Commission members listened well to the citizens' comments, noting that additional Commission discussion would be necessary. It would be appropriate for the Commission to close the public portion of the hearing, and continue it to a future meeting. Mr. Wilson asked the staff to summarize their thoughts on the public comments.

Mr. Duncan stated that he was grateful for the staff's contributions, and he appreciated the compliments for the staff from citizens and Commission members. He noted that the staff takes their jobs very seriously, and have been working hard to get the Goals & Objectives to this point. Mr. Duncan noted that the comments were divided, but respectful, which is not often heard in public forums. He said that the staff would provide notes from the hearing and guidance for the Commission as they move forward through the next step in the process.

Mr. Wilson said that approximately 37 citizens spoke at today's hearing, but one consistent theme was appreciation for the staff's work, and he appreciates the staff as well.

- c. **Schedule Vote for Planning Commission Recommendation** – Mr. Wilson stated that the Commission could schedule a special meeting for Thursday, September 7th, after their regularly scheduled Zoning Committee meeting at 1:30. The Commission would then meet at 3:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber.

Mr. Duncan noted that the Zoning Committee agenda is light, and the staff believes that they can review all items within 90 minutes and be prepared for a 3:00 p.m. meeting.

Mr. Wilson stated that the meeting would include a continuation of Commission discussion, as well as a review of any changes to the draft proposed by the staff as a result of today's public comments, and, ultimately, a vote on the Goals & Objectives.

Mr. Duncan stated that the staff would recommend that the Planning Commission try to get to a vote on September 7th if possible, in order to allow the Council maximum time to review the draft within the 90-day window in which they must act.

Ms. Jones noted that, since it will be a special meeting, the Commission will be allowed to discuss only the item that is on the agenda.

Action: A motion was made by Ms. Plumlee, seconded by Mr. Owens, and carried 10-0 (Brewer absent) to continue this hearing to September 7, 2017, at 3:00 p.m., with the sole purpose of discussing the Comprehensive Plan draft Goals & Objectives.

III. Other Business – None.

- IV. Adjourn** – There being no further business, Chairman Wilson declared the meeting adjourned at 4:01 p.m.